1:Sanders Z-5 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

843 787 you put an orange seed in the fire and name a pregnant woman. If the seed jumps high, it will be a boy; if low, a girl. Much is made of the size and shape of the child in the womb. If the expectant mother "has a small belly," she will have a boy. Another method is to wrap a knife in a handkerchief and put it in a chair. If a pregnant woman sits in the chair, feels the object, and identifies it as a knife, then she will bear a boy. The same will hold true if by chance she uses her right foot every time she steps into a house. Or one can take the half-moon bone from the head of a fish, throw it on the head of an expectant mother without her knowledge. If she starts looking down, she will deliver a girl; if she feels in her hair to see what hit her, she will have a boy. Thus, from his earliest days, a son is given a sense of importance, a feeling which tends to be accentuated as he grows older.

562 834 576 593 [492] [626] Women, by observing the formal proprieties, show their deference to men and seemingly manifest to all about them their status as inferior beings. Foreigners in Greece are deceived, however, if they mistake this *form* for the *essence* of family life, since the Greek mother is a key figure in the home, even though she stands up when her husband comes into the room or walks if there is only one donkey. Village men, when asked about this last practice, often reply, "Why, my wife would be ashamed to be seen riding if I were walking. The other women would laugh her out of the village." Younger men, whose ideas on these matters differ from those of the previous generation, proudly assert that they make their wives ride if tired. Yet the women who may be walking behind their mounted husbands do not feel inferior, for they are observing an accepted custom. According to some observers, a woman who lets her husband enter first or have the best chair feels no more inferior than would a man in the West who holds the door open for a woman or gives her his seat on a crowded subway.

[312] [482] [626] [522] It is hard to know what goes on in a woman's mind when she is at the fountain filling two five-gallon tins to carry back home and suddenly is joined by her husband who has just returned from town by bus with a small twine bag of groceries. He offers the bag to her and says that he will carry the heavy tins, but she refuses. Does she say to herself: "He has his work and I have my work"; "I don't want the other men to laugh at him carrying water, which is woman's work"; "I don't want the women laughing at me for letting my husband do my work when I'm capable of doing it"; "He probably offers to do this for me so he can ask me to do something else much more disagreeable"? Nevertheless, the upshot is that she carries the tins. To be sure, the women refuse to smile when they hear the men in the home joking about the way some husband in Northern Greece, at the end of the Communist guerrilla war, supposedly made his wife walk in front in order to protect him from any undetected land mines left over from the war.

562 593 521 If the wife has worries, she discusses them with other women and only occasionally with her husband.

1:Sanders Z-5,A (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

[P. 156]

VIII

Courtship and Marriage

177 834 581 593 **A young woman, who had grown up in the traditionally sheltered way in a Greek village, after spending several months in an American university, made these comments:**

The father here in America is like a brother instead of a father.

I like the way the American mother reasons with the children and doesn't order them around.

In Greece you never tell anybody about your boy friend — not even your parents. Over here people talk about private matters. If you should do so in Greece, your parents would throw you out of the house.

In Greece we marry for love; in America you love without marrying.

831 834 593 [581] One may question the last statement as far as the Greek villager's marrying for love is concerned; but there is no question about the Greeks' stress upon keeping the boys and girls apart until they are married. The honor, or chastity, of the bride is a value of great importance, and any breach of the sex mores may have dire social consequences. To be sure, there are violations of this taboo and in many areas a gradual erosion of the rigid enforcement, but in rural Greece one can count upon parents and brothers actively to try to safeguard a young woman's honor. This is even institutionalized in what is called *e time tou adelphou* (the honor of the brother),

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

for the brother is supposed either to avenge any violator of his sister's honor or, if she is to blame, to punish her. Whereas formerly he was supposed to act swiftly, today he tries to get the man to marry his sister; if the man does not, then the brother, "if he wants to rinse the honor of the family," beats or kills the man. He may kill his sister if she is thought responsible. Nowadays matters seldom come to such an extreme point, but the tradition of protection is still very strong. The folksongs reinforce it, as shown by these summaries of two from the island of Euboea.[1]

The Betrayal

A bad young girl dressed herself in European clothes, got her lover and went to the coffeehouse. She ordered the proprietor to bring coffee and the hubble-bubble (narghile, or pipe whose smoke passes through water). Two friends of her brother betrayed her. They said to the brother: "Why do you sit there, Vangeles, and do not go to the coffeehouse to see your sister who 'drinks' the hubble-bubble?"

Vangeles got up and went to the coffeehouse and found the bad sister who was "drinking" the narghile. "Get up, Eurydice, to see your shame. You, who have put me and all our family to shame."

He thrust his knife in her twice in the right side, striking the liver and half of the heart. Two words the poor thing was able to say before she dropped and was dead: "The friends of my brother were my death because I had the courage to have a boy friend." The friends of the brother took her up, carried her home, and handed her over to her mother.

Soussa

Soussa, the willowy, the pride of Kyme, loved Saribeys, the handsomest boy of the village. He loved her and she loved him for fifteen years. She had a brother who was away with the consuls; every morning she would sit on her bed, take her little handkerchief and fill it with tears. Her master [lover] asks her, "What is wrong with our Soussaki? Why does she sit and cry?" and her mother tells her, "Hush, my Soussa, don't cry and don't torment yourself. For your sake your brother is roaming in foreign countries."

At night, at midnight, they heard bang after bang on the door. Her mother shouted to her and her master told her, "Get up, my Soussa, open and see who is outside." Soussa got up, opened, and saw her brother. Immediately she thought and she became faint [her eyesight became shorter]. Her brother said, "You turned the house into a brothel. I cannot stand it." He pulled his little knife out of the golden sheath, thrust it in her heart like a worthy *pallekari* [handsome young man, brave fighter for freedom].

"Soussa, mine, who killed you? May he be cursed. May he wear my curse forever as an amulet."

There are conflicting stories about what actually occurs in villages throughout Greece. From the Peloponnesos I received the reply: "In our village there is very strict control between unmarried boys and girls. Not

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

even 'good morning' is exchanged." From near Arta: "In this village there are no premarital relations among the young people, and very few cases of illicit relations even among the adults." From a Macedonian village: "There are illicit relations among the young people but they are kept secret." There are cases of young people living together after engagement, for three stated reasons: (1) to save the cost of wedding at the present time; (2) to wait until the girl has her dowry completed; and (3) to avoid the boy's entry into the army. As long as he remains single, he can be exempted on the grounds of being the financial support of his family, but if he married he would not be exempt, unless he is the son of a widow. In a village near Grammos Mountain any illegal relations are legalized by force, whereas in a village near Serrai the young people are said to lead very restricted lives and to engage in no premarital relations. At the same time, a double standard does exist, with the men not feeling bound to the restricted code imposed upon the women.[3]

The age of marriage has some connection with the emphasis upon the girl's chastity. One informant half-seriously said the girls are married off between twelve and eighteen years of age before they have gotten "into trouble." Over fifty years ago, William Miller reported that the church did not permit men to marry before the age of fourteen or women before that of twelve. Ordinarily, a peasant father would begin to look for a husband for his daughter when she was fifteen, although in some parts of the country eighteen or nineteen was considered the usual age.[3] But in Greece today the age at which girls marry has risen, probably due to the difficulty many face in acquiring a dowry. National statistics for 1957 show that 13 percent of brides marry before 20, 41 percent between 20–24, and 30 percent between 25–29. This means that 84 percent of all brides marry before 30 years of age. For the grooms, the marriage-age is somewhat higher: 2.5 percent before 20; 17.5 percent, 20–24 years; 39 percent, 25–29; 21 percent, 30–34. These figures account for 80 percent of all grooms. Further detailed information about the rural population comes from ten village studies as shown in Table 4.

In the villages of Attica, such as Malakassa or Pentele, the girls marry at eighteen or over and the boys at about twenty-five after they have completed their military service — a practice which Table 4 shows to be quite general throughout Greece.[4]

Selecting a Mate

In such a society as rural Greece, how do the boys and girls become acquainted? One method, common but by no means universal, is the "bride's walk," as people often refer to the Sunday afternoon promenade.[5] Boys stroll together and eye the girls who pass them in groups of three or four. Even in those villages where there is no such promenade, the young

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

others present, for there are prescribed roles that go with the position one holds at a given time. Social control tends to enforce the playing of these prescribed roles and to discourage the highly individualistic variations to which others are not prepared to respond.

Without attempting to trace the complete system of operating controls in a Greek village, I shall mention some of the methods encountered as supplements to many already dealt with in earlier chapters.

The most far-reaching controls have to do with the taking of human life. Today in most parts of Greece this has passed into the hands of the police and the legal system, but some generations ago it was common for family members to think that they themselves should deal with anyone who killed a kinsman.

From time to time, I would ask in a village whether any serious crimes had been committed and would hear of an isolated case — such as the woman who, a few years ago, as the result of a boundary dispute, had picked up a stone and killed a man, thereafter being put in jail for a year or so. Usually, people said, the relatives help settle disputes.

Or, when I asked what would happen locally if a person were caught stealing, I was told: "We don't have such people here. If anyone did steal the villagers would exclude him; they would ostracize him so he couldn't stand it. They would also take him to court."

But for most villagers the controls deal with behavior which is not considered criminal. Photiadis shows one way in which this operates:

> The father is the leader, and family members want to please him, and he in turn takes care of the whole family. If a mother sees her adolescent daughter mingling with boys more than is expected, she will reprimand her by saying "you are ridiculing your father," or "the men at the coffeehouse will laugh at you." [a]

He contends that the coffeehouse operates as a social control over the family through the father, "who is confronted directly by the opinions of the cliques that form it and operate as reference groups for the rest of the population in the village." It is also true that social control operates in much the same way for the women through the neighborhood "gossiping groups."

Even in Athens one is aware that the social controls from the village still pursues the individual. A Greek friend asked her dressmaker why she did not wear dresses with short sleeves and was told that she could not. "But don't you get hot?" "Oh, I would rather get hot," replied the dressmaker, "than have people gossiping about me in the village."

A group of village girls in a special course at Pierce College near Athens, when asked what the people of their communities would do if anyone went counter to prevailing norms, compiled this list:

2: Friedl E-5 (1955-1959) 463 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

581 583 over his daughter-in-law's land or money.) From the groom's point of view, an industrious young girl also has high value, and if she is healthy, good-looking, modest, virtuous, and amiable as well, she is of still additional worth. Therefore, an ugly older girl with a bad reputation would have to bring a large dowry to compensate for her personal deficiencies. Conversely, an attractive, healthy, virtuous young girl might be able to marry a slightly wealthier man than her dowry would normally be expected to command. Greek folk songs often lament the [533] story of a young girl who attracted a wealthy older suitor to whom her family married her because he was willing to take a smaller dowry. The songs, in this instance, reflect actual situations known on the Boeotian countryside, although they do not occur with any great frequency.

Negotiations, Courtship, and Marriage

584 For the families involved, the marriage negotiations have the quality of participation in a kind of ritualized contest. A young man may have been recommended to a girl's father; the father sends an intermediary with information as to how much dowry he is willing to give; the intermediary then goes off to the groom and his father, to whom he exaggerates the size of the dowry and the qualities of the girl. The villagers assume he will also exaggerate the qualities of the groom to the girl's family. The enjoyment of the game lies in each group's efforts indirectly to get accurate information about the other side. This is done by making inquiries among one's own relatives living in the prospective spouse's village and by asking questions of others who know the family. Secrecy about the very existence of the negotiations is helpful at this point, because the villagers do not believe they can get accurate information if anyone knows they have a direct interest in the matter. Many times a sister in another village will act as informal intermediary for her brother and try to find out how much of a dowry some of the better young men are asking for. Tentative questions of this sort may be asked for years before a serious negotiation is finally fully launched. These tentative steps may be terminated at any time without loss of honor on either side if the young man informs the intermediary that the dowry is not quite enough, or if the girl's father uses the excuse that his daughter is not yet [583] ready to marry because she has not accumulated sufficient *rukha*. In fact, the grooms are not interested in the *rukha*. As one villager phrased it, "It is land and money they burn for around here."

In Vasilika, both in the previous generations and at present, it has been possible for a young man and woman never to have seen each other until the first formal occasion for meeting. However, a young man may have seen an attractive girl at a *paniyiri* or other festival, and may have asked his father to [834] investigate her situation. But, since unmarried village boys and girls do not talk to each other in public unless they are related, the chances are that he has never talked to her. A young girl may, in her turn, know a great deal about the young men in the surrounding villages and may also have had opportunities to see them at the local festivities, but may never have talked to any of them. In any case, it

2:Friedl E-5 (1955-1959)1963 EH1 Greece EH1
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judgment, not through formal academic education, but by a natural flowering of common sense based on ordinary experience. Small children who get too near the fire or run too long in the sun are not scolded for disobedience but are excused on the grounds that they do not yet know any better. *"Dhen gzeri,"* they say, "He doesn't know." As children grow older, however, the same misbehavior is treated as a sign of unintelligence and accusations of stupidity may be flung at the child. *"Dhen echis myalo?,"* "Don't you have a brain?" they say.

The quality of shame which the villagers want to emphasize in their children is an inner sense of embarrassment at the thought of improperly revealing oneself—either the physical self (modesty) or the inner emotional self. The words for shame, which cluster about the term *endropi,* are used in at least three different contexts. When children refuse to talk to strangers, and smaller ones literally hide behind a parent, the elders say as an excuse, *"Drepete,"* "He is bashful." For young children to feel embarrassment at revealing themselves to strangers is proper in the villagers' view. As children grow older, girls are expected to be more modest than boys and shyness remains an excuse for females after it ceases to be one for males. The older women of the village, for example, find it difficult to join the men and visitors at a feast table; they prefer to eat in another room. They go into the *saloni* after their guests have finished eating and sit without speaking near the walls of the room. Villagers know that urban women do not have such reticences and they feel it necessary to make some excuse for their wives. *"Dreponde,"* they say, "They are ashamed," and although modesty as applied to a refusal to eat with one's guests is no longer fashionable, neither is it considered a disgrace to the husband or children.

A second use of the word for shame occurs when children show lack of self-control at stages in their development when it is already expected of them, *"Min drepese?"* "Aren't you ashamed?" is often a reaction of elders to a child who is less cleanly or orderly by village standards than he should be. Excessive running or shouting, physical fights with other children, loud and prolonged vituperation, enjoyment of food which borders on gluttony—these are the kinds of actions greeted with the suggestion that the child is exhibiting to the world too much of his inner needs. It is not the existence of the need that is considered bad, but rather the inability to control its expression. If he cannot exercise sufficient control, the child is not utilizing his sense of shame as is proper; he is making an unseemly exhibition of himself.

Although shame is considered an internal individual emotion, the process by which the villagers reveal his sense of shame to a child includes exaggerating and parading before others any evidence of possible shamelessness. That is, children are not merely asked *"Min drepese?"* but the action they should not have engaged in is often made much of and enlarged so that whatever inner discomfort is inculcated is reinforced by invoking the ridicule of outsiders. On one of our returns to the village for a brief stay, I visited one of my friends and casually asked where her five-year-old daughter was. Her mother answered that the child was probably hiding because she had been scolded for getting mud splattered on her dress. Some time later, as I was leaving, the mother caught sight of the little girl trying to hide herself on a narrow window ledge as she peeked out to catch

2: Friedl E-5 (1955-1959) EH1 Greece EH1
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different from each other for that. In the farming life of the village, men and women work, for the most part, at different tasks inside the households and in the fields. Men go to the coffeehouses alone and talk politics among themselves, women do neither; men do not discuss politics with women. In 1956, at a time the men of the village were agitated over the Cyprus issue (as was the entire Greek nation), a woman announced to a group of other women one morning that the English had hanged two young terrorists on Cyprus. Only one other woman in the group of five knew what she meant, and one of the group had so little knowledge that she asked, "What is Cyprus?"

The strength of the conceptual differentiation of men and women in the village may be judged from the expectation that the women will give men the kind of deference the young give the old. Men assign to women, and women accept for themselves, some other attributes of the young: modesty; greater emotionality and sensibility and, therefore, a longer continuing struggle for self-control; less rationality; and a greater vulnerability, which necessitates assistance from their menfolk and from the supernatural.

Americans are struck by the separateness of the preoccupations and activities of men and women in Vasilika. Men and women meet only with respect to their joint family obligations—the responsibilities of procreation and of supporting their children. Among the villagers there is even an atmosphere of covert mutual dislike between the sexes. Men express contempt for what interests women and vice versa. The spheres of activity in which men and women support each other have to do with the honor of the family and constitute a division of labor based on sex but with a curiously sexless quality. There is no mutuality between the sexes in the village when the needs of masculinity or the needs of femininity are involved. The women have little patience with, and may even fear, male extravagance in efforts to maintain *filotimo;* men have little patience with emotional crises in females.

It is difficult to write of these characteristic attitudes without creating a distorted picture of women as an inferior sex and of males and females at war with each other. The male-centeredness of Greek village society is undeniable; but neither are women wholly without rights. For example, the avoidance of places where men gather is a form of modesty, as I have suggested, and not an admission of inferiority. Women have their own conversational groups of working neighbors which men do not join. In addition, the economic functions of the dowry and the residual control women maintain over it gives them considerable voice in the decisions made within the family.

Finally, the residual equality of a common humanity which appears in the reciprocal comments and suggestions between people in superordinate and subordinate positions—at least in the village—again mitigates the severity of the relationship betwen the sexes. Nor should we leave the subject without mention of the accommodation many couples make to their marriages or of the frequent development of mutual affection between husband and wife who find themselves compatible as individuals once they have worked together to raise a family. What I wish to explain here is that mutual respect and affection between a married couple can develop in Vasilika, but that in order for it to do so, the husband and

/21 cont./ The one crop farming in most cases develops many economic and social difficulties. The peddlers of finished goods in the villages absorb a large part of the trade. Usually in exchange for their goods they get live poultry and eggs.

The biological function. The morals are very strict in the village. In the grammar school the children are /22/ together but after the age of 15 one seldom finds boys and girls playing together. Only the close relatives have an approved right to dance with a girl or walk with her to the market. The boys get married at from 18-25 and the girls from 15 to 20 years of age. The period from 15 to 20 is spent by the girl in preparing her dowry. She is busy at the loom or in embroidery with the needle and thread. One of the desired qualities of the girl is to have her handmade stuff. The ultimate aim of the marriage is to have children. If it happens that she cannot have a child the first year of her married life then gossip will start in the village of her inability to bear a child. Just the way a farmer thinks about a cow not calving, so do the relatives and especially the father and mother-in-law. There is no limit as to the number of the children, as long as both husband and wife are healthy. The usual belief and excuse is, "God gave them and He will take care of them." Both young men and the young women are instructed as to their duties as fathers and mothers. Birth control has no place here. Nature takes care of it. The strongest of the children survive under the conditions that are available for living. Besides, to use any method of preventing birth to a child is thought to be an immoral act. Thus out of seven to eight children in a family about five survive up to the age of six and the rest /23/ die before then.

Size of families. The size of families varies in Megali Vrisi. One finds the largest numbers among Caucasians and the smallest among Thracians. The Caucasians used to live in compound families and still they stick to this idea even though it was broken down due to the new method of distribution of land. Even today one finds as large as 25 members in the family and as low as 3 members in the family. The compound family makes farming

/26 cont./

Illegitimacy. During the 16 years of their settlement in this village no case of illegitimacy has occurred. Cases of this kind are ostracized and are looked upon as very immoral. The morals are very strict and their observance is mutual by both men and women. 848 [626] [834]

Permanence of Marriage. Under the Greek Orthodox church it is hard to get any kind of divorce. No divorce has so far occurred in the village and seldom is there any chance for divorces. Since the women are pre-occupied the year around with house work, farm work and raising children there is not much time left to think /27/ about divorces. There was one case only that had an excuse that his wife could not bear any children. Since he was the only male in the family he thought the family name would disappear without any children. This was not a good excuse for a divorce so he had to live on with his wife. 586

Educational Function. The family life is the education function. Neither society or the government has much influence as the family traditions have on their children. The influence is so strong that even after marriage the son, according to the existing traditions, works for the father and carefully executes all his orders. The girls learn from their mothers embroidery work, cooking, baking, washing, weaving, spinning, and all those jobs that are expected from a grown up girl. 868 593

The different vocations which are taught in school in many countries, are here under the guidance of the mother and entirely under family supervision.

The son learns the art of manual work in the fields from his father. When very young he follows carefully his father and by the time he is 14 years old he knows more or less the routine side of farming.

The moral training of the children rests with the grandparents. They have more influence and more exper/28/ience of moulding the lives of the children. 867 603

The grandfather with his numerous heroic stories starts to influence the life and the future of the boy. His climax ends [538] [702]

/37 cont./

help the father and mother in the struggle of life. At certain times of the year when there is less work at home and in the fields the neighborhood children come together and play hide and seek. When boys and girls reach the age of 11-12 they separate and seldom play together anymore. The child in Megali Vrisis has a hard time to express its freedom. 857 [526] [834]

The school organizes picnics at which the teachers teach the children how to sing and dance. These picnics are the only active days that provide ample time for the children to play. [872]

Music Music is something which is never taught but it is there always. From children to grown-ups all sing and dance singing is a part of their dance it is learned easily. There are no books or music notes and the musi-/38/ cal instrument players never learned with notes but just by hearing. Children going to the fields sing, people working in groups in the fields sing, and groups returning home from harvest sing. People sing at the coffee houses, at their homes and in the woods. Shepherds sing with their fiddles and peddlers advertise their goods with a song. Singing runs through the church services from beginning to the end and when the women dress up the bride they sing all night to her. No one writes any song to remember it. They are handed down from generation to generation and sung so often that there is no fear of forgetting them or losing them. Singing is a part of their recreational life, a part of their courtship and a part of their expression of appreciation of nature. The philosophy of life of those people is built on tradition and singing comes voluntarily to express themselves. Some of their songs have to with incidents of heroism or suffering and torture. There are songs that move one to tears and there are others that move one to sacrifice everything he possesses. Even the happiest songs are tinged with an air of sadness. It is probable that their ancestors have been through gloomy periods which has influenced their songs. May be these wars will create more such songs among the village people /39/ for their beloved ones who were killed during the spring months. Each girl who lost her sweetheart in the war will make a song for him and sing it while working in the fields. 533 [535] [461] [796] [585] [765]